

the cliff. He sat down, perfectly stupefied and helpless, on the nearest bench.

At the close of life, the loss of a man's customary nourishment extends its debilitating influence rapidly from his body to his mind. Mr. Ronald had tasted nothing but his cup of coffee since the previous night. His mind began to wander strangely; he was not angry or frightened or distressed. Instead of thinking of what had just happened, he was thinking of his young days when he had been a cricket player. One special game revived in his memory, at which he had been struck on the head by the ball. 'Just the same feeling,' he reflected vacantly, with his hat off, and his hand on his forehead. 'Dazed and giddy—just the same feeling!'

He leaned back on the bench, and fixed his eyes on the sea, and wondered languidly what had come to him. Farnaby and the woman, still following, waited round the corner where they could just keep him in view.

The blue lustre of the sky was without a cloud; the sunny sea leapt under the fresh westerly breeze. From the beach, the cries of children at play, the shouts of donkey-boys driving their poor beasts, the distant notes of brass instruments playing a waltz, and the mellow music of the small waves breaking on the sand, rose joyously together on the fragrant air. On the next bench, a dirty old boatman was prosing to a stupid old visitor. Mr. Ronald listened, with a sense of vacant content in the mere act of listening. The boatman's words found their way to his ears like the other sounds that were abroad in the air. 'Yes; them's the Goodwin Sands, where you see the light-ship. And that steamer there, towing a vessel into the harbour, that's the Rams-gate Tug. Do you know what I should like to see? I should like to see the Ramsgate Tug blow up. Why? I'll tell you why. I belong to Broadstairs; I don't belong to Ramsgate.

Very well. I'm idling here, as you may see, without one copper piece in my pocket to rub against another. What trade do I belong to? I don't belong to no trade; I belong to a boat. The boat's rotting at Broadstairs, for want of work. And all along of what? All along of the Tug. The Tug has took the bread out of our mouths; me and my mates. Wait a bit; I'll show you how. What did a ship do, in the good old times, when she got on them sands: Goodwin Sands. Went to pieces, if it come on to blow; or got sucked down little by little when it was fair weather. Now I'm coming to it. What did We do (in the good old times, mind you) when we happened to see that ship in distress? Out with our boat, blow high or blow low, out with our boat. And saved the lives of the crew, did you say? Well, yes; saving the crew was part of the day's work, to be sure; the part we didn't get paid for. We saved *the cargo*, master! and got salvage!! Hundreds of pounds, I tell you, divided amongst us by law!!! Ah, those times are gone! A parcel of sneaks get together, and subscribe to build a Steam-Tug. When a ship gets on the sands now, out goes the Tug, night and day alike, and brings her safe into harbour, and takes the bread out of our mouths. Shameful—that's what I call it—shameful.'

The last words of the boatman's lament fell lower, lower, lower on Mr. Ronald's ears—he lost them altogether—he lost the view of the sea—he lost the sense of the wind blowing over him. Suddenly, he was roused as if from a deep sleep. On one side, the man from Broadstairs was shaking him by the collar. 'I say, Master, cheer up; what's come to you?' On the other side, a compassionate lady was offering her smelling-bottle. 'I am afraid, sir, you have fainted.' He struggled to his feet, and vacantly thanked the lady. The man from Broadstairs—with an eye to salvage—took charge of the human wreck,